

NIMH CONSTITUENCY OUTREACH & EDUCATION PROGRAM
Suggestions for Mental Health Outreach to Latinos: Tip Sheet 1
Updated December 13, 2000

Please note that the URLs and navigation tips below were accurate as of December 13, 2000. Because Web sites are constantly updated, this information may change at any time. We would appreciate your notifying your Outreach Liaison if you discover inaccuracies in the tip sheet so that we can update it.

Latinos¹ are the fastest growing population in the United States. It is projected that the Latino population—now estimated at approximately 32 million—will have accounted for approximately 37 percent of the Nation's growth between 1995 and 2000. In 1999, 23 percent of all Latino families were living below the poverty level, more than one-third of Latinos spoke little or no English, and one-third of Latinos under the age of 65 did not have health insurance (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998 and 1999). This translates into a significant number of Latinos who have trouble accessing health and mental health services in this country.

One of the goals of NIMH's Constituency Outreach and Education Program is to work toward eliminating mental health disparities for all minority groups, including Latinos. Achieving this goal requires targeting both individuals and the communities in which they live, and crafting messages and materials so that they are culturally appropriate, sensitive to, and respectful of the beliefs, values, and language of the particular group.

The purpose of this tip sheet is to provide practical suggestions for Outreach Partners who are interested in starting or expanding outreach efforts to Latino populations within their States. Note that many of the steps suggested can be carried out simultaneously.

Guide for Building Latino Community Programs

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (part of the U.S. National Institutes of Health) developed an excellent primer for working within the Latino community. *Bringing Heart Health to Latinos: A Guide for Building Community Programs* can be accessed on their Web site <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov> the guide itself can be found on http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/heart/latino/lat_impl.htm. The guide presents the basic steps for planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating a community-based health promotion program for Latinos.

Ideas for Mental Health Outreach to Latino Populations

- **Assess the needs.**
 - **Gather data** about Latino demographics and health status in your State or in a specific region of your State, as well as about issues that Latinos may face in accessing adequate health and mental health care. (See Tip Sheet 2, Some Latino Web Resources, for additional sources of information.)

¹ For the purpose of this document, the term Latino refers to individuals of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. The Federal Government uses the term "Hispanic" to classify all persons of Latin American origin residing in the United States. However, different communities may prefer different terms (i.e., Latino, Hispanic, or Chicano). Please remember that using the correct term demonstrates your sensitivity to and respect for the population being served.

- Latino Mental Health Web site <http://www.latinomentalhealth.net/> supported by NIMH.
 - U.S. Bureau of the Census <http://www.census.gov> . For State population estimates by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin (1990 to 1999), go to http://www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/st_srh.html.
 - U.S. Office of Minority Health Resource Center <http://www.omhrc.gov/>. Click on **OMH Resource Center**, then on **Database** to search their customized database. Or call their Resource Center at 1-800-444-6472 to speak with an information specialist.
 - National Center for Farmworker Health <http://www.ncfh.org/>.
- **Identify health- and non-health-related coalitions, organizations, and programs that target Latinos in your State.** Be sure to include organizations such as churches, community centers, neighborhood organizations, Latino media, *botanicas* (Latino herb pharmacies), *bodegas* (Latino grocery stores), music stores in Latino neighborhoods, and key businesses.
- To find your State's office of minority health, go to the U.S. Office of Minority Health's Web site <http://www.omhrc.gov/>. Click on **About OMH** and find the link to **State offices of minority health**.
 - To find organizations in your State that are working on Latino issues, go to the National Council of La Raza's Web site <http://www.nclr.org> and click on **Affiliate Locator**. Also, check this site to see whether national Latino organizations have chapters in your State.
 - Check your State's *Latino Yellow Pages*, which can usually be found at the telephone company's offices.
- **Identify and interview key community leaders, stakeholders, and gatekeepers within the Latino community**, many of whom will work within the coalitions, organizations, and programs that you have identified (above).
- If you are bilingual—or can enlist bilingual friends—you can identify some key individuals (including Latino reporters and media personalities) by listening to Latino radio stations and reading Spanish newspapers (check libraries and *bodegas* for copies).
 - Be certain to include Latino physicians, as they tend to be respected sources of health information in the community as well as good conduits of information. Also include Latino mental health professionals and local traditional folk healers.
 - When you conduct your interviews, ask for the names of other individuals you should be including.
 - Solicit their opinions about the attitudes, beliefs, and practices of Latinos regarding mental health and mental illness, as well as their related needs.
 - Gauge their levels of interest in participating in a coalition or helping in other outreach work.
- **Develop a plan.**
- Create a preliminary plan. On the basis of the data collected, articulate the program's goals and objectives; the mental health issue(s) to be addressed; intended audience(s); ideas for key strategies, channels, and activities to reach your audience; resources needed; anticipated timeline; and evaluation methods.
 - A few ideas to consider:
 - In planning a Latino media campaign, keep in mind that Spanish radio is one of the most effective channels for reaching your audience. Work with the Latino media in

your State to identify the most effective ways to work with them—and be certain that you recruit them as partners/coalition members!

- In addition to the media and churches, other points of access worth exploring are *botanicas*, *bodegas*, beauty salons, and music stores.
 - Check out NIMH's current list of Spanish materials on <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/spanishpub.cfm>. These materials are in the public domain and can be downloaded and duplicated free of charge. After some of your Latino partners/coalition members have reviewed them, consider posting some of these materials on your organization's Web site or providing hyperlinks to them.
 - Because numerous country- and region-specific dialects exist among Latinos, if you decide to develop Spanish-language materials, use the language used by the Latino media. When materials are targeted to a specific cultural group, ask representatives from that group to review them for language and graphic [pictorial] nuances.
 - Consider seeking funding or in-kind donations to reprint some of NIMH's Spanish materials with your organization's logo, telephone number, and Web site address.
 - If at all possible, have bilingual staff/volunteers available to respond to Spanish-speaking callers who contact you as a result of your campaign. Work with your State partners/coalition members to brainstorm creative ways to fill this need.
- Update the plan as you gather new information. When you present the plan to your coalition (or the organizations partnering with you), members will change it, shape it, and make it their own. At the same time, they will make it more relevant to the communities you are trying to reach.
- ***Form a coalition or statewide partnerships.***
 - Decide whether a coalition is the appropriate strategy for your outreach effort. Decide what role your organization can play in implementing the action plan and the coalition. Consider the goals of your organization, your resources, and costs and benefits in general.
 - If you decide that a coalition is needed and there are no existing statewide coalitions that might embrace the agenda of Latino mental health outreach, form your own.
 - Recruit the right people to become coalition members. A strong, diverse, committed, and well-connected membership is absolutely essential to the success of your coalition.
 - In the near future, NIMH will send all Outreach Partners more detailed information about forming, building, and maintaining coalitions. Please stay tuned.
 - ***Plan for program evaluation.***
 - Check out InnoNet <http://www.innonet.org>, a nonprofit organization that provides evaluation tools, including a step-by-step guide to creating evaluation plans. Nonprofit organizations can submit an evaluation plan for expert review at no charge.
 - If you need additional help with program evaluation, please contact your Outreach Liaison.